

Christ Church
1 Dresden Avenue, east side between
Church and School Streets
Gardiner
Kennebec County
Maine

HABS No. ME-143

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

CHRIST CHURCH

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Location: 1 Dresden Avenue, Gardiner, Kennebec County, Maine

Present Owner
and Occupant: Christ Episcopal Church, Gardiner, Maine

Present Use: Church

Statement of
Significance: This was the third "Gothick" church built in New England and one of the earliest built in America. Christ Church played a pioneering role, introducing a new architectural style to America. This style became the more academic Gothic and dominated church architecture for decades. Christ Church was one of the earliest stone buildings in Maine and perhaps the earliest stone church in the state.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Cornerstone laid May 31, 1819. Consecrated October 20, 1820.
2. Architect: Reverend Samuel Farmar Jarvis, an Episcopal clergyman then serving as the rector of St. Michael's Church, Bloomingdale, New York. Reverend Jarvis' drawings were altered slightly. The church was reduced by ten feet in length and six feet in width.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Reference for deeds is to the Kennebec County Registry of Deeds, Kennebec County Courthouse, Augusta, Maine.

1818 Deed. October 24, 1818, recorded November 6, 1818 in Book 30 page 405
Robert Hallowell Gardiner
to
St. Anns Church

1819 Act. Passed by the Massachusetts General Court on June 19, 1819
St. Ann's Church or Episcopal Society of Gardiner
shall be called
Christ's Church

4. Builder: Christ Church was largely financed by Robert Hallowell Gardiner, of Gardiner, Maine.
5. Alterations and additions: Originally the church had a pinnacle at each of the four corners of the tower, and perhaps one at each of the four corners of the building itself. All were removed, probably between 1852 and 1880. A one-story parish house, built in 1965, is attached to the church at the rear of the southern side.

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B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Christ Church and its contemporaries, the first Gothic churches in New England, introduced a new style of architecture to America. The Rev. Samuel Farmar Jarvis and other members of the Episcopal Church recognized that Gothic church architecture would give the church a new identity which did not recall the colonial past and would thus help the church recover from the unpopularity it suffered as the result of the Revolution. They also believed that Gothic church architecture was particularly adapted to sacred use, aiding in the religious experience.

The Gothic churches built were in essence typical meeting-houses with exterior and interior detail which was largely drawn from eighteenth-century English architectural forms presented in a work by Batty Langley. They were not structurally or architecturally true to real Gothic churches. However, these Gothic churches paved the way for the more academic Gothic style which dominated America's church architecture during the nineteenth century.

C. Supplemental Material:

Samuel Farmar Jarvis (1786-1851) was born in Middletown, Connecticut. His father was the Right Reverend Abraham Jarvis, the second Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut. Samuel Farmar Jarvis was an honor graduate of Yale College in the class of 1805 and became a minister in 1811. He served as the rector of St. Michael's Church in Bloomingdale, New York; St. Paul's Church in Boston, Massachusetts; and Christ Church in Middletown, Connecticut. He maintained a variety of interests throughout his life and was a professor, a writer, an editor, and a scholar as well as a minister. When he died he left what was probably the finest private American library of its time, a collection of about 10,000 volumes.

Robert Hallowell Gardiner (1782-1864) was the grandson of Dr. Sylvester Gardiner, who was responsible for the settlement of the land on the Kennebec River which he called Gardinerston and which now comprises, Gardiner, West Gardiner, Randolph,

Pittston, and adjoining towns. Most of Dr. Gardiner's estate went to Robert Hallowell in 1787. In 1803 Robert Hallowell assumed the name of Gardiner, as stipulated in Dr. Gardiner's will, and went to what had just become the town of Gardiner. He settled titles to his grandfather's property and assisted the community in many ways. In 1804 he joined St. Ann's church, which his grandfather had founded. The church became crowded and in 1817 the parish decided to build a new church.

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Robert Hallowell Gardiner gave to the parish the land on which Christ Church was built. The money raised by the sale of pews was not enough to finance the church. In 1818 Robert Hallowell Gardiner signed a contract to build the church regardless of cost.

D. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Original plan and rear elevation in the Gardiner Family Papers, Oaklands, Gardiner, Maine. 1828 and 1830 drawings in Evelyn L. Gilmore's Christ Church, Gardiner, Maine, Antecedents and History, Gardiner, 1893. 1852 engraving in J. W. Hanson's History of Gardiner, Pittston, and West Gardiner, Gardiner, 1852. Stereopticon view labeled "Kennebec Valley Views, S. S. Vose and Company, Skowhegan" in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. 1896 photograph in the Board of Trade's The City of Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A., 1896. 1830's lithograph in the collection of the Maine Historical Society, Portland.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deeds. Kennebec County Registry of Deeds, Kennebec County Courthouse, State Street, Augusta, Maine.

Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr. "The Origin and Analysis of Christ Church, Gardiner, Maine." Unpublished manuscript, 1967, in the collection of the author, Portland, Maine.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Board of Trade, The City of Gardiner, Maine, U. S. A., (1896).

Christian Journal and Literary Register, January, 1821, an article attributed to Robert Hallowell Gardiner.

Gardiner, Robert Hallowell. Early Recollections.
Hallowell, 1936.

Gilmore, Evelyn L. Christ Church, Gardiner, Maine.
Antecedents and History. Gardiner, 1893.

Hanson, J. W. History of Gardiner, Pittston, and
West Gardiner. Gardiner, 1852.

Jarvis, George A. and others. The Jarvis Family.
Hartford, 1879.

Jarvis, Rev. Samuel Farmar. An Address, Delivered in
New Haven, At the Laying of the Cornerstone of
Trinity Church, May 17, 1814. New Haven, 1814.

Langley, Batty and Thomas. Gothic Architecture Im-
proved By Rules and Proportions. London, 1742.

Portland Gazette (Portland, Maine), June 15, 1819.

PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This rectangular, single-story granite church is built in the Gothick style. A square tower, topped by an octagonal spire, projects from the center of its facade.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximate. The church is 54 feet wide and 80 feet deep. The tower is 18 feet square and projects 11 feet from the center of the front wall of the church. An altar area 24 feet wide projects ten feet from the center of the rear wall of the church. The church is 40 feet high. The tower itself is 70 feet high; with the spire it is 120 feet high.
2. Foundations: Cut granite.
3. Wall construction: Granite ashlar. The blocks are nearly equal in size and the outer surfaces display the natural cleavage of the rock. The granite was quarried on Litchfield Neck on land owned by Robert Hallowell Gardiner. It was brought to Gardiner on boats drawn by horses.

4. Trim and finish: Granite. The church and tower have battlements above a projecting stringcourse. On the sides of the church the course of granite above the stringcourse contains indented blocks. A projecting stringcourse rings the church above the foundation. All the windows and the louvered openings in the tower have projecting sills and are capped by projecting arches. The projecting arches above the three facade doorways are corbelled.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doors: The three arched double facade doors are wooden, painted. Each has a raised rectangular lattice pattern.
 - b. Windows: The windows vary in size but are similarly detailed. The painted wooden mullions are smooth, clustered columns with ribbed arches springing from them, which in turn support narrower columns and arches. Small panes of clear leaded glass in a diamond pattern fill the arches and remaining spaces in the facade windows. The panes are smaller where the spaces are smaller. The large window in the eastern end wall and all the side wall windows are filled with leaded stained glass in diamond and figurative patterns.
 - c. Belfry: Painted wooden panels with horizontal louvers fill the four arched openings to the belfry at the top of the tower.
6. Spire: The octagonal spire was originally exposed brick, painted. It is now shingled in asphalt. The spire is topped by a bannerette weathervane.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is shingled in asphalt.
 - b. Cornice: The granite battlements form the cornice of the church and tower.
8. Stairs: Each facade door is approached by a flight of wide granite stairs.
9. Fence: The church grounds and the cemetery to the south are enclosed on the north and west by a wrought iron fence.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The side facade doors lead to narrow vestibules which formerly led to the church but which are now used as closets. The center facade door leads to a square vestibule in the tower from which one enters the church. The sanctuary has a center aisle and two side aisles, set in from the outside wall, giving four sections of parallel pews. The raised choir area projects slightly into the sanctuary. There is an organ in the northeast corner. In the southeast corner of the sanctuary and east wall of the altar recess are entrances to the modern parish house. A gallery runs across the rear of the sanctuary.
2. Stairs: Inside the tower a stairway rises in several runs from the vestibule to the belfry, providing access to the gallery. It is wooden, painted, with open treads. It has square corner posts with molded capitals, square balusters, and a molded handrail. Each landing has narrow molded trim.
3. Flooring: Wide pine boards, painted; hardwood, stained; and linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior walls are wood and frame. The walls and ceilings are plastered and painted.
5. Doors: Wooden, painted. The ogee arched doors have eight recessed panels creating a large lattice pattern.
6. Trim: Wood and plaster, painted. A cluster of three smooth wooden pilasters with molded capitals and horizontal stringcourses stands to either side of the altar recess. Together with clustered plaster corbels on the side walls, these pilasters support a vaulted ceiling. Molded plaster ribs define the vaulting, which is continuous over the center of the church and crossed by each window at the sides. Pendant plaster corbels hang from the lower intersections of the cross vaults; rosettes decorate the intersections of the ribs.

Two clusters of four smooth wooden columns with molded capitals and horizontal stringcourses support the wooden gallery which projects from the rear sanctuary wall. The solid wooden balustrade is carved with raised ogee arches with trefoil undersides, joined at the top by a molded stringcourse and topped with raised finials. The arches rest on a molding of three round sections.

The entire sanctuary has a wainscot of horizontal boards

to the height of the side window sills. The window mullions are detailed on the interior as they were on the exterior. Each window is recessed and has molded wooden trim. The wooden door trim consists of smooth pilasters supporting half-round ogee arches with finials. Each is framed at the top by a wooden square arch mounted on the wall, consisting of a half-round member with a pendant corbel.

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7. Hardware: Many of the doors retain their original wrought-iron hardware.
8. Furnishings: The walls of the pews are wooden, painted, with rectangular recessed panels along the aisles. Their railings are wood, stained, carved in a curve at each entrance.

The organ is enclosed in an elaborate painted wooden casing, carved in Gothic motifs. The reredos, altar, choir pews, and altar area furnishings are wooden, stained, also carved in Gothic motifs.

9. Lighting: The church is lit by tall cast-iron fixtures which stand on round, painted wooden pedestals beside the center pews of the side aisles. A column branches at the top to hold three glass globes. These fixtures were originally gas, but have been converted to electricity. Single and branching painted cast-iron gas fixtures on the rear wall of the sanctuary have been converted to electricity. A wrought-iron chandelier hangs from the ceiling above the altar.

D. Site:

Christ Church faces west toward the common in Gardiner.

Prepared by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr.,
and
Mary-Eliza Wengren
September 1971

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during 1971 and 1972 in the course of a photo-data project in the cities of Bath, Hallowell, Monmouth, and Richmond in the State of Maine. The project was arranged in response to the initiative of Mrs. Linda B. Clark of Row House, Inc., in Hallowell, Dr. Charles E. Burden of the Bath Marine Museum, Mrs. Paul L. Roberts of the Richmond Historical and Cultural Society, and Mr. H. Earle Flanders of Monmouth. All of these preservationists actively solicited

or contributed funds and effectively fostered increased interest in the architectural heritage of their respective communities. The project was under the general direction of James C. Massey, at that time Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey; was supervised in the field by Denys Peter Myers, then Principal Architectural Historian of HABS; was carried on by Student Architectural Historian Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Boston University; and was continued by Alan Mast, Maine Arts and Humanities Commission, and Mary-Eliza Wengren (Mrs. Richard E., Jr.), Maine Historic Preservation Commission, under the field supervision of Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Photographers were Mark C. Bisgrove, Sylvester Cobbs, Stanley Schwartz, Leon P. Shepard, and Richard Dwight Sturgis.

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